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RESPONSE OF MUNI OPERATORS TO THE
PASSENGER BOARDING PLATFORMS ON POLK STREET

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PLANNING DIVISION
AUGUST 1, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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Author:

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[Illegible text block]

Bureau of Transportation
James J. Finn, Director

[Illegible text block]

RESPONSE OF MUNI OPERATORS TO THE
PASSENGER BOARDING PLATFORMS ON POLK STREET

Summary. Interviews were conducted with all sixteen MUNI operators who have been working the 19-Polk line continuously since the installation of passenger waiting platforms in May 1974. Very clearly the drivers like them--15 of the 16 drivers supported the idea. "Greatest thing that ever happened to drivers." "Very helpful to me." "They're working out real well."

Drivers appreciated the elimination of the need to maneuver in and out of the traffic lane, and expect this will cut down on both vehicle collisions and passenger accidents caused by swinging the bus in and out. Operators report that "people love them"--and that the platforms "help the elderly the most". "Old folks say they eliminate the hassle with the first step." "People can get on and off a lot faster. . . .It's easier to step up. Makes it easy, more convenient, for them."

Operators were asked specifically if they felt a problem existed because of the conflicts between buses trying to get to short, nearside corner islands and vehicular traffic making right turns. A majority of the MUNI drivers reported "no--usually no problem". Although most drivers acknowledged that some delays do result, those delays which do result are seen as inevitable in mixed traffic operation: "That's always going to be like that". "There's only so much you can do." Nonetheless, although several drivers reported no change in overall running times on Polk Street, about as many reported the platforms do save time--particularly in passenger boarding times. Only one driver felt they "cost time". Some drivers felt traffic conflicts would be reduced and travel times improved by locating islands on farside rather than



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nearside corners. Most operators experienced few if any problems with trucks and other vehicles parked at the platforms--although double parking along the street remains a problem.

One of the platforms' unanticipated advantages cited by drivers was the increased visibility to MUNI operators of passengers waiting to board--as distinguished from other pedestrians on the corner. "You can see the people--no complaints about people being passed up." " . . . You know people are waiting for the bus."

The most frequent unsolicited complaint concerned the lack of signs indicating what the islands are for or even that there is a bus stop at the corner. "There's nothing to identify them." "They should be painted loud or red or striped or something so you know there's something special about them." "The only gripe from passengers is that there are no signs." "People like them more or less--a lot of people don't know what the platforms are."

While only one driver opposed the concept of boarding islands, the majority "wish they'd put in a lot more". Some felt "they should be everywhere". "Any place you can get them."

Some operators supported their installation "not on all streets, but they're good on streets like Polk--streets that are small and confining".

At least two recommendations emerge from the interviews with operators which should be considered as the Transit Preferential Streets Program continues:

1. There is a critical need for signing to identify the boarding platforms and their function.
2. Driver reactions, coupled with staff discussion of the drainage problems, suggest that at least one farside platform location might be tried on an experimental basis.

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Background. In May 1974 passenger loading platforms were constructed on a 90-day trial basis at three southbound locations along the 19-Polk motor coach route. These extensions to the sidewalk pavement are the first proposals of the city's September 1973 Transit Preferential Streets Program to be implemented, and are located at the nearside (northwest) corners of California, Pine and Sutter streets.

There are about 26 operators currently driving the 19-Polk line on a regular basis, including sixteen men who have been working the "19" continuously since the platforms were installed. These sixteen operators were interviewed between June 24 and July 1 about their reactions to the Polk Street platforms.

Approach. Drivers were interviewed either on or near their coaches or in the Kirkland Division Gilley Room. Since all drivers were being interviewed on either their own time or their break time between trips, the interviews were kept as brief and informal as possible. Nonetheless, a basic format was adhered to consisting of four questions and series of questions, as follows:

1. What do you think of them?
What's good about them? How do they help?
What's bad about them? What are the problems?
2. How do passengers feel about them?
Any comments to you from passengers?
3.
 - a. Do they make it easier to meet your time points and run on schedule?
 - b. Do you feel there's a problem with stopped cars keeping you from getting to the islands?
 - c. Do the islands ever get blocked by traffic-- delivery trucks, etc?
 - d. Do you feel the islands make any difference in safety of operation?
4.
 - a. Should there be more?
 - b. Any other comments?

Response. Drivers overwhelmingly favored the concept of the boarding platforms--and enthusiastically so. On questioning, many critical comments and suggestions were elicited, but 15 of the 16 operators who have been working the "19" since the platforms were installed were enthusiastically favorable to them. Only one operator disapproved of their use.

Specific comments are summarized on the following pages. Similar comments have been grouped, and the number of drivers volunteering such responses is indicated for each group. Most drivers are represented by more than one response to each question; and, to the extent that the interviews were somewhat informal and the questions overlap, some comments are repeated under more than one question.

1. GENERAL REACTION OF MUNI DRIVERS

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THEM?

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THEM? HOW DO THEY HELP?

WHAT'S BAD ABOUT THEM? WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

Positive Comments

General: They're working out real well--they basically help. They're great. A real innovation. Very helpful to me as a driver--I dig them. Real nice. Greatest thing that ever happened to drivers. I like them--ought to be all over--...all the other drivers I've talked to like them.

(9 Drivers)

Problems? There are no problems. There's nothing bad. Can't see anything wrong with them.

(5 Drivers)

Specific: Eliminates in and out movements. Cuts down on maneuvering. Don't have to wait for traffic. No problems pulling in and pulling out (of zones). Streets are narrow--you can stay in your lane.

(6 Drivers)

Helps old people. (There are) a lot of old people on the "19"--a lot go to the Maritime Museum (Senior Citizen Center). Helps people who are crippled.

(4 Drivers)

(Helps problem with) double parking on street.

(2 Drivers)

You can get right up to the curb. Easier to pull up (to curb).

(2 Drivers)

Saves on time. Faster loading.

(2 Drivers)

They give people a place to board coach.

(1 Driver)

Easier for both passengers and drivers.

(1 Driver)

Easier to get out back door.

(1 Driver)

Negative Comments

General: They're the (expletive deleted). They screw up traffic. If cars are in front--you have to let people off against parked cars and people get pissed off. Outside of that, they're okay in lieu of enforcement (of no-parking regulations).

(1 Driver)

Specific: There is a problem with cars turning--autos stopped at the light: pedestrians keep cars from turning.

(2 Drivers)

Neutral Comments

General: Not much difference really.

(1 Driver)

2. PASSENGER REACTION

HOW DO PASSENGERS FEEL ABOUT THEM?

ANY COMMENTS TO YOU FROM PASSENGERS?

Positive Comments

General: Very favorable. They seem to like them. People--they love them. Passengers like them--especially the ladies. Most like them--some dislike them.

(8 Drivers)

(Passenger comments?) Yes--right after they went in. Not any more. Only a few.

(4 Drivers)

Should have had them a long time ago. Why didn't they do this ten years ago?

(2 Drivers)

Specific: Helps the elderly the most--helps on first step. Good for older people. Helps old people more than (it helps) us (drivers). Old people really like them. Old folks say it eliminates the hassle with the (first) step.

(7 Drivers)

People can get on and off a lot faster--they're right there. It's easier to step up. Makes it easy, more convenient, for them.

(3 Drivers)

Negative Comments

Specific: A few people get on and complain--others think its the best thing that ever happened--complaints are mostly about the lack of signs. The only gripe is (there are) no signs. No comments except "Is this a bus stop or not?" People like them more or less--a lot of people don't know what (the platforms) are.

(4 Drivers)

3a. TRIP TIME

DO THEY MAKE IT EASIER TO MEET YOUR TIME POINTS AND RUN ON SCHEDULE?

Positive Comments

Yes--it saves time. Saves 1-3 minutes per stop--people don't have to step off curb and pull themselves up onto the bus. Yeah--I think it does speed things up--people are not just standing there--they're ready to get on the bus and you know the people are waiting for the bus. Yes--you don't have to pull in and pull out.

(4 Drivers)

In a sense yes--traffic flows a little better.

(1 Driver)

It makes it easier to keep on time.

(1 Driver)

It makes loading easier.

(1 Driver)

You can see the people--no complaints about being passed up.

(1 Driver)

Negative Comments

It costs time--waiting for signals.

(1 Driver)

Neutral Comments

Its about the same. Not too much (difference in time). Can't see any difference. Not especially (faster).

(4 Drivers)

It doesn't delay you.

(1 Driver)

3b. INTERSECTION DELAYS

DO YOU FEEL THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH STOPPED CARS KEEPING YOU FROM GETTING TO THE ISLANDS?

Positive Comments

Not too much--which suprised me. No--really no problem. Not a problem--'cause that's always going to be like that. No--they have to stop anyway--doesn't slow things much more. No--not really (a problem)--it's only 30 seconds (until cars move). Not especially (a problem)--they do (keep buses from getting to zones) anyway. You just wait--not really a problem. Not much of a problem--you got the time. Motorists behind you would have to wait anyway.

(10 Drivers)

True--but there's only so much you can do.

(1 Driver)

Negative Comments

It's a problem with backed up cars--but I'd rather have them (islands) than not have them. Problem with turning cars. Especially autos stopped for right turns at California, Sutter. That's one of the problems--also, cabs use them.

(4 Drivers)

3c. VEHICLES BLOCKING PLATFORMS

DO THE ISLANDS EVER GET BLOCKED BY TRAFFIC--DELIVERY TRUCKS, ETC.

Comments

Haven't found any. They stay clear. No, not really. Not very often--sometimes.at California, vehicles are double parked just behind the islands. Not too much at night--but once (only) a UPS truck parked right on the island. 95% of the time they're clear. Only. once.

(11 Drivers)

Cabs block islands--no trucks at night. ...Cabs use them.

(2 Drivers)

Sometimes (they're blocked) with trucks using islands. Just liquor trucks. . .

(2 Drivers)

Double parking--quite often.

(1 Driver)

(They're) not (blocked) as often as before in regular bus zones.

(1 Driver)

3d. EFFECT ON SAFETY

DO YOU FEEL THE ISLANDS MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE IN SAFETY OF OPERATION?

Positive Comments

Gets rid of dangerous maneuvering in and out--don't have to maneuver on skinny streets. No "clips" (when moving) in and out. You go straight--don't have to pull in and out. No pull-in and pull-out problems.

(6 Drivers)

I would think so. Possibly. People don't have to step out between cars--you have good vision of waiting passengers. Yes--especially old folks, crippled. Yes--(cuts down on) boarding accidents. Possibly--passengers don't have to step between cars.

(4 Drivers)

If you'd had them a week ago (at Sacramento), I wouldn't have had the accident I had with a Pacific Telephone truck.

(1 Driver)

Neutral Comments

Nothing much.

(1 Driver)

Negative Comments

Some cars pull out from behind islands with less caution than they otherwise would.

(1 Driver)

4a. SHOULD THERE BE MORE?

Positive Comments

General: There should be more islands--and more bus lanes too. They should be everywhere. I hope so. Should have them all over. Wish they'd put in a lot more. I think so. Any place you can get them. All over. I wish they'd put in more of them--but on the far side (of intersections). Yeah--not on all streets--but they're good on streets like Polk--streets that are small and confining.
(10 Drivers)

Specific: Inbound (Northbound)--Post to Sacramento or Clay--you lose a lot of time in there--you sometimes lose three lights. California and Post inbound.
(2 Drivers)

Sacramento (Outbound). Should be more--especially Sacramento. If you'd had them a week ago (at Sacramento), I wouldn't have had the accident I had with a Pacific Telephone truck.
(2 Drivers)

. . .at Maritime Museum--a lot of old people (use that stop)--sometimes 25 to 30 at a time (get off there).
(1 Driver)

Yes--especially hospitals and commercial areas.
(1 Driver)

Sure--in shopping areas.
(1 Driver)

Taylor, Hyde--along the Wharf in a couple of places.
(1 Driver)

Washington to Post (Outbound)--at every stop.
(1 Driver)

Negative Comment

"You gonna put them all over the city?"
(1 Driver)

4b. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

They should be painted loud or red or stripped or something so you know there's something special about them--so they stand out--so they're easily identified--There's nothing to identify them. Only gripe (from passengers) is no signs. No comments (from passengers) except: "Is it a bus stop or not?"
(5 Drivers)

Farside (of intersection) would be better than nearside: nearside "with" (platforms) is better than nearside "without", but farside would be better. Move them to the farside to (allow buses to) get around waiting cars. Farside would be better--but I'd still rather not have them.
(4 Drivers)

Nearside is better than farside. Nearside is good for bus connections--especially at one-way streets.
(2 Drivers)

You can see the people--no complaints about people being passed up. People are not just standing there--they're ready to get on the bus--you know people are waiting for the bus.
(2 Drivers)

Islands could be longer--there's a problem in getting up to the short islands--particularly in rush hours.
(2 Drivers)

Drainage is bad.
(2 Drivers)

They could be higher.
(1 Driver)

Cars hop the corners--they should be rounded.
(1 Driver)

I got a ticket for not pulling in when the bus zone was blocked--if there'd been an island that wouldn't have happened.
(1 Driver)

The other major problem is (still) double parking along the street.
(1 Driver)

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